

# Notes for the Ekklēsia Meeting

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## Seasonal Adjustments

by Dan Trygg

“John answered, ‘A person cannot receive even one thing unless it has been given him from heaven.’” John 3:26

“And He was saying, ‘For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father.’” John 6:65

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:10

“Remind them... to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed...” Titus 3:1; cf. 3:14

“Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.” II Timothy 4:2

**Life has its seasons.** There are times of busyness and productivity, ...and times when things are slow, and it seems like you are accomplishing little. There are exciting, invigorating periods, and there are the mundane, laborious intervals where we have to work through paperwork, cleanup, and maintenance kinds of things. **There are phases when it seems like what was working doesn't seem to work, anymore. Does that mean you have to try something different, or is it just a “slow time”? Do you just wait it out, or try harder to “make things happen”?** There are setbacks, course changes or adjustments, breakdowns, unforeseen circumstances or unanticipated obstacles that bring different demands upon our time and resources. These can be just occasional incidents, or they can sometimes grow into a whole series of interruptions, stumbles and limitations. Some challenges or changes go on for years, or are even permanent. **Health issues, life cycle realities that affect our opportunities and abilities can be annoying, and sometimes they become the new paradigm we have to live within.** Many of us go from being single, to married, to having little kids. Then we go through the busy school years, the young adult and college age years. Then, we watch them grow up and become independent. They move out, get married, and then, before you know it, we are grandparents! In addition, many of us are dealing with aging parents. We have to help with the adjustments that have to be made for their diminishing abilities. Before long, we will be dealing with those realities for ourselves. **Every phase of life requires different things from us.** I don't want to make it sound negative, because it is not. There are many wonderful victories and joyful experiences mixed in with some of these more taxing ones. Life is like the stock market; it has its up's and its down's. **We can have joy and peace through it all, if we yield to the will of God,** and stay in tune with His leading and direction. **Our faith can be an anchor to our soul, ...but this does not mean we won't have questions, or get blown about and bounced around on the changing seas of life** (Heb. 6:19).

**I have been going through some searching myself.** I have been pursuing Christ for 43 years, and, from the beginning, I was teaching Bible studies and doing one-on-one discipling. I drove all over the metro area to meet people, and had a very crammed schedule. Then, in 1996, a friend and I started a small interactive church. We did that for about 14 years. Four years ago, I split the church into two groups, and went off to start something new. I have not often had a Sunday with *nothing to do*, but, since handing off those church groups, I have not consistently had the larger group dynamic I had experienced before. I also used to meet with a lot of *new* believers. Now, I find I have *less* meetings, but I am working at a *deeper level* with a *smaller number* of people. My weekly sermon notes (like this) reach way more people than before, and I find myself spending more time in prayer. I used to be *much* more involved in *service work*, fixing cars, doing home repairs, driving people to appointments, etc. Now I am not doing nearly as much of that. My circumstances have changed, due to family responsibilities, and I just don't have the time to do these things. Instead of being the lone discipler with DTM, there are now over a dozen of us, ...plus the *many* we have affected and influenced over the years. Most of us are actively working with people, sharing Christ with them and helping them develop in their relationship with God. **I am seeing the benefits of Jesus' model of investing in a few multiplying disciples. I have banked on that as the main thing to focus on,** and I don't regret that. The early church *exploded* because of multiplication. **Jesus set the standard: (1.) Disciples were to identify with Jesus in baptism,** symbolizing their *death to their former life*, and *consecrating their future lives* to live for God (Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:1-11). Being a disciple of Jesus Christ means choosing to live for Him. **(2.) Disciples were to continue to study and apply God's word in their lives.** Jesus said we were to teach His disciples to observe and obey *all* that He said (Jn. 8:31; Matt. 28:19,20; Acts. 2:42; II Tim. 3:16,17). If you are not living to *learn* Christ's will and *do* it, you are *not* a disciple of His. **(3.) Disciples had an objective: They were to make disciples of all nations** (Matt. 28:19; Lk. 24:44-48; Acts 1:8). They were to do what they could to further the mission to reach, preach, teach and activate people of every nation to live for Christ. This means investing their time, abilities and money to *reach others*,

here and around the world. **Jesus' strategy works well, if people are faithful to do their part** as disciples. Thus, it is important to look for and invest in those who will be faithful to continue the discipleship chain to others (II Tim. 2:2).

As I mentioned, I have been uncomfortable with some of the changes in my life. **I have been praying through Ephesians 2:10 a lot**, reminding God that He has trained and equipped me for service, and asking Him to bring those opportunities, ...the people and situations..., into my life that He has prepared, so that I could be used by Him to help others and bring Him glory. **And, He does bring people and situations into my life, but I guess it is not what I expect, or not the same as in the past. It is a different season**, I guess, ...or, I am *between* things, ...or maybe I just need some time with less pressure. So, **the other day, I was talking to God about this, and He reminded me of John 3:26**. John the Baptist's disciples were frustrated and maybe even a little angry, because John's ministry used to be the biggest, most popular and powerful thing God was doing in the land of Palestine. Everyone was excited about him, and crowds thronged to hear him. Hundreds had come to be baptized by him. *Now*, that had changed. He was being eclipsed by Jesus. In fact, John himself had pointed others *to* Jesus, and the crowds and throngs were going to Him. The first words out of John's mouth were profound, **"A person is not able to receive (or, take) not even one thing, if ever not it is having been given to him out from heaven."** In other words, *God decides*. It is *God* who lifts up one, or puts down another; humbles one or exalts another (cf. Psa. 75:6,7). **It had been God's will earlier to lift up John's ministry, and now it was His will that Jesus' ministry would increase and John would become less visible**. This was *powerful!* It spoke to me again about the priority of prayer. God will prepare the works beforehand. *He* decides *what* they are, and He also decides whether to keep us working in the background, or whether to draw people to us, or *not*. **God has been pleased to keep me operating behind the scenes**. Oftentimes, I will have a number of people move on *all at the same time*. It is like God *graduates them*, and soon thereafter He brings other people. "A person cannot receive even one thing, if heaven has not granted it." **John learned to rejoice in the exaltation of Jesus**, even as the best man has joy for his friend, the groom, as he gets married to his betrothed. **I find delight in the growth of those I work with**, and the growing success some of them are finding, as God moves them into ministry.

**I was meditating on this verse, and noticed a cross reference to John 6:65. Almost exactly the same wording is used there!** "...no one is able to come to Me if ever not it might be having been given to him out from the Father." In the context, Jesus had confronted many of those who were following Him, challenging their motives. They wanted *physical* food, while Jesus was proclaiming a message that would nurture and nourish their *spiritual hunger*. He said that if they wanted *life*, they needed to eat His flesh and drink His blood. If they wanted to *abide in life*, they needed to be gnawing on Him and drinking of His blood *ongoingly*. This was a teaching that was difficult to understand. It confused some and offended others. He made clear that *this was a word picture*, "It is the Spirit who makes alive, the flesh profits nothing, *the words* I have spoken to you are Spirit and are life" (6:63). It wasn't *about* His flesh and blood! It was about *trusting Him for life*, and *drawing life from Him*. Nevertheless, most people left Him. It was too much, too offensive to them. **Those crowds that John's disciples had been jealous of just a few chapters before now were abandoning Jesus!** Jesus' response, ..."No one can come to me unless it has been given from the Father." Earlier in the chapter, He had said, "No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me *draws* him. ...It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be *taught* of God'; everyone *hearing* from the Father and *learning* comes to Me" (6:44,45). One of my co-workers has been out preaching and sharing with people almost every day, and yet is frustrated by the meager results. **No one can come, ...and no one will stay..., unless the Father is working to open their hearts**. The person is not *able* to come apart from the drawing, heart-opening grace of God. Without God's *prior working*, people are blind, deaf and closed to the things of God. People can *learn from* what God reveals to them, and *respond to* Him or *reject* Him, however. It is not enough to *see* and *recognize* who the Son is, they also must *trust* in Him. Each person still *has a choice*. **Jesus Himself experienced seasons of obscurity, seasons of popularity, and seasons where people were offended and hard hearted**. He knew that it wasn't about His preaching alone. God would draw people, and open their hearts (Acts 16:14). **Jesus was a man of prayer. He knew that effectiveness in ministry cannot come apart from the working of God.**

While that is true, **God chooses to reveal Himself through various avenues and means of revelation**. He uses nature (Psa. 19:1-4; Rom. 1:18-20; Acts 14:17), the inner voice of our conscience (Rom. 2:14-16), the testimony of God's people (Matt. 10:18; Lk. 21:12-15), signs, wonders, and answers to prayer (Heb. 2:3,4). The change in our lives, the fruit of the Spirit in our character, and the good deeds we are led by the Spirit to do will all reveal the reality and glory of God to others (Matt. 5:14-16; I Pet. 2:12; Jn. 13:34,35). It especially pleases God to reach people through the message of the good news (Rom. 1:16,17; 10:12-17; I Cor. 1:21). God appeals to humankind through *us* (II Cor. 5:18-20). Therefore, **we are to not lose heart in doing good, for in due ('in its own') season we will reap**, if we are consistent (Gal. 6:9,10), and no matter *what season, convenient or inconvenient, we still are to proclaim the word of God* (II Tim. 4:2).